



## The Oxford Handbook of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190201371.001.0001>

Published: 2018

Online ISBN: 9780190201388

Print ISBN: 9780190201371

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### CHAPTER

## 16 The Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control

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<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190201371.013.15> Pages 295–322

Published: 11 December 2018

### Abstract

This chapter turns to the age-graded theory of informal social control. This theory posits that crime is more likely to occur when an individual's bond to conventional society is weakened. This chapter briefly considers Sampson and Laub's *Crime in the Making* before providing a summary of the revised version of the theory in *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives*. It then provides an updated theoretical and empirical assessment of the core principles of the theory, namely a review of current research on turning points and human agency. The chapter next details current challenges to the importance of turning points in adulthood and reviews contemporary barriers to mechanisms of desistance. The chapter concludes with some commentary and final thoughts on the theory.

**Keywords:** [informal social control](#), [age-graded theory](#), [turning points](#), [human agency](#), [adulthood](#), [desistance](#)

**Subject:** [Criminology and Criminal Justice](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

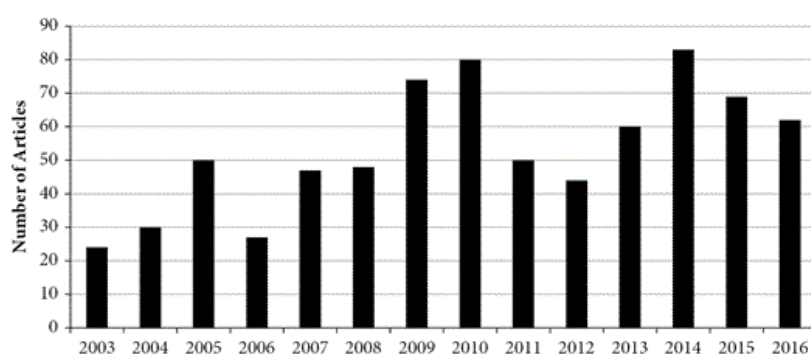
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OVER the past 20 years, research on life-course and developmental criminology has grown rapidly. Numerous research journals, policy agendas, symposiums, the American Society of Criminology (ASC) Division, award categories, and handbooks all reflect the rise of a life-course or developmental perspective on crime—what Sampson and Laub (1995a) dubbed “life-course criminology.” Evidence of this trend can be seen in Figure 16.1, which depicts the number of life-course publications on crime across major social science journals in the past 14 years.<sup>1</sup> The degrees of separation of scholars conducting work related to this topic have also been reduced and now reach across disciplines and oceans.

Life-course criminology, although situated in the relatively burgeoning field of criminology, has successfully contributed to the description and explanation of major criminological questions and

challenges. This work has led to the examination of trajectories of offending across the life course, identification of causes of crime and delinquency, evaluation of macro- and micro-level relationships, exploration of variation in persistent offending and desistance from crime and has broadly accommodated an interdisciplinary perspective on antisocial behavior (see review in Laub 2006). Although life-course and developmental criminology have garnered the attention and contributions of many well-respected scholars, the work by Robert Sampson and John Laub and their age-graded theory of informal social control served as one of the catalysts for the growth in research. Utilizing one of the most comprehensive datasets of the time, Sampson and Laub (1993; Laub and Sampson 2003) reassess data collected by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in their *Unraveling Juvenile Delinquency* study to develop a theoretical framework that explains childhood antisocial behavior, adolescent delinquency, and crime in early adulthood.

**Figure 16.1**



Frequency of Life-Course Publications, 2003–2016

The overarching framework for Sampson and Laub’s age-graded theory of informal social control is that crime is more likely to occur when an individual’s bond to conventional society is weakened. Although this framework shares a similar foundation with classical control theory (Hirschi 1969), it emphasizes the salience of later life-course milestones, or “turning points,” that require modification of the static nature of classical control theory. Despite early differences in childhood experiences and delinquency, adult social bonds to work and family are significantly related to changes in adult crime. This position largely contrasts with the age-invariance thesis of Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983), which argues that crime declines similarly with age for all offenders and is due solely to the underlying propensity to offend known as self-control.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will primarily focus on the theoretical developments and empirical assessments after the publication of Laub and Sampson’s *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives* (2003) to provide a current review of updates and challenges to the age-graded theory of informal social control.<sup>2</sup> Section I will briefly consider Sampson and Laub’s (1993) *Crime in the Making*, followed by the response to remaining questions with a summary of the revised version of the theory in *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives* (Laub and Sampson 2003). Section II will provide an updated theoretical and empirical assessment of the core principles of the theory, namely a review of current research on turning points and human agency. Section III will detail current challenges to the importance of turning points in adulthood. Section IV will review contemporary barriers to mechanisms of desistance. Lastly, Section V will conclude with our own commentary and final thoughts on the theory.<sup>3</sup>

## I. Age-Graded Theory of Informal Social Control and Turning Points in the Life Course

*Crime in the Making* serves as a first step toward developing a theoretical framework that explains childhood antisocial behavior, adolescent delinquency, and crime in adulthood. As stated, the primary organizing principle is that crime is more likely to occur when an individual's bond to society is attenuated. Following Elder (1975, 1985), Sampson and Laub (1993) differentiate the life course of individuals on the basis of age and argue that salient institutions of both formal and informal social control vary across the life span. In addition, Sampson and Laub (1993) explicitly account for processes of continuity and change in criminal behavior over the life course. Thus, despite the importance of the effects of cumulative continuity and state dependence of prior antisocial behavior, salient life events and socialization experiences in adulthood are capable of modifying trajectories of crime. Still, *Crime in the Making* left several unanswered questions and set the stage for additional directions for future research.

For example, Sampson and Laub (1993) called for further integration of quantitative and qualitative research, a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between age and crime over the full life course, and further unpacking of the mechanisms underlying persistent offending and desistance from crime. Beyond the "natural sanctions" or health costs associated with criminal offending (i.e., early mortality), there are shifts in the salience of formal and informal social controls over time. For instance, scholars have generally found that there needs to be an "accumulation of losses" before informal social controls can catalyze an inhibition toward engaging in anti-social behavior (Graham and Bowling 1995; Shover 1996). Additional emphases on the dimensionality of turning points called for further investigation into the precise nature of turning point processes (Rutter 1996). For instance, not all turning points can be equated with major life experiences, nor can all transitions lead to changes in life trajectories. As such, contextualizing turning points and group processes for explaining continuity and change in criminal behavior became of primary interest.

These motivations led Laub and Sampson (2003) to follow up the Glueck men with a 35-year follow-up and to supplement the existing data with three new sources of data collection—criminal record checks (local and national), death record checks (local and national), and personal interviews with a sample of 52 of the original Glueck men. These cases were selected on the basis of their trajectories of adult offending in order to maximize variation. This new compilation of data encompasses data on crime and life experiences of the Glueck men from age 7 to 70. Although not abandoning the importance of informal social controls, the revised version of the theory recognizes that "social actors are always embedded in space and time [and] respond to specific situations (opportunities as well as constraints) rather than pursuing lines of conduct in purely solipsistic fashion." (Emirbayer 1997, p. 307). It is necessary to contextualize concepts such as crime and how they relate to particular turning points because their meaning and significance varies by context. Thus, *Shared Beginnings* reflects an effort to further unpack the processes of persistence and desistance and illuminate why and how adult social institutions and roles have the capacity to reorder life-course trajectories.

## A. Age and Crime over the Life Course

Through a series of within-individual trajectories of age and crime, Laub and Sampson (2003) find support for the variability in the age-crime curve among individuals but confirm that crime declines for all, even among the active offenders. Thus, the aggregate age-crime curve does not mirror individual age-crime trajectories as the evidence demonstrates important variation in the peak in offending and age at desistance (Laub and Sampson 2003). Nonetheless, across all offenders the underlying process of desistance follows a fairly similar path as all offenses decline systemically. Stated differently, even the serious delinquents of the Glueck sample desist but do so at varying time points across the life course and at different rates. As such, although child prognoses are relatively accurate in terms of predicting criminal behavior between individuals through their twenties, they do not yield distinct groupings that are prospectively valid over the entire life course. This finding holds regardless if offenders are grouped or identified prospectively or ex post (Laub and Sampson 2003). These findings give credence to a middle-ground position with respect to the criminal careers debate in that there is variability among individual age-crime curves and that age has a direct effect on offending such that “life-course desister” is the more accurate label. Further, this suggests that a general desistance processes is at work across the life course and that these processes can only be understood through the full interplay of childhood, adolescent, and adult experiences.

## B. Mechanisms of Desistance

Given the heterogeneity in adult criminal trajectories that could not be predicted from childhood, Laub and Sampson (2003) argue that institutions play an important role in understanding crime over the life course. Laub and Sampson (2003) utilize hierarchical linear models and qualitative interviews with a subsample of the Glueck men to assess and describe turning points throughout the course of their lives. Consistent with evidence found in *Crime in the Making*, several turning points emerge as part of the process of desistance from crime to include marriage/spouses, military service, reform school, work, and residential change. Laub and Sampson (2003) exploit the longitudinal nature of the data to examine within-individual change, holding stable characteristics of the person constant and evaluate the impact of changes in social location (e.g., marriage) on criminal trajectories. Laub and Sampson (2003) conclude that, when employed, in military service, or married, the Glueck men are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. These models provide strong statistical evidence of the probabilistic enhancement of desistance associated with turning points such as marriage, military service, and employment.

The qualitative narratives in *Shared Beginnings* further illuminate the mechanisms underlying the desistance process. In particular, these institutional or structural turning points to varying degrees involve (1) new situations that “knife off” the past from the present, (2) new situations that provide both supervision and monitoring as well as new opportunities for social support and growth, (3) new situations that change and structure routine activities, and (4) new situations that provide the opportunity for identity transformation (Laub and Sampson 2003). Thus, although several institutions and turning points emerge frequently throughout the Glueck men narratives, other life experiences characterized by these similar processes are likely to trigger movement toward desistance. Overall, these institutions tend to reorder short-term situational inducements to crime and, over time, redirect long-term commitments to conformity.

## C. Agency

In addition, Laub and Sampson (2003) identify the importance of offenders choosing to desist in response to structurally induced turning points that serve as a catalyst or work to sustain shifts in criminal behavior. Consistent with notions of agency, offenders engage in the purposeful execution of choice and individual will that lead to projective actions either toward persistence in crime or toward disengaging from criminal activity. Although not all of the Glueck men explicitly describe choosing to desist from crime, many Glueck men indicate examples of sidebets that ultimately result in desistance. That is, before they knew it, the men had invested resources and time in a marriage or a job such that risking this investment became non-negotiable (Becker 1960). Even if below the surface of active consciousness, actions to desist are in a fundamental sense willed by the offender, leading to what Laub and Sampson (2003) refer to as “desistance by default” (Sampson and Laub 2003). The Glueck men were thus seen to be active participants in their own desistance, especially when their actions projected a new sense of one’s self-concept.

Human agency was also seen as critical for understanding persistent offending. Several of the Glueck men insisted on a criminal lifestyle due to the rewards of crime (Katz 1988) or because of a willful resistance to perceived domination (Sherman 1993). Several of the life history narratives illuminate the sense of injustice present in the Glueck men’s perspective of the criminal justice system driven by their acerbic contacts with the system. Persistence in offending is more than the weakening of social bonds, and desistance is more than the presence of or strengthening of social bonds. Therefore, agency plays a critical role across the full spectrum of offending patterns and infuses a random component into life-course turning points that make “neat prediction” a difficult task.

## II. Current Empirical Assessment

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Beyond the evidence provided in *Shared Beginnings*, numerous other researchers have taken up the task of evaluating the strength of claims that age-graded roles later in adult life are significantly related to persistence and desistance in offending. The following sections will discuss current evidence that evaluates the role of marriage, employment, and the military as turning points in the desistance process.

### A. Marriage

Perhaps the most studied turning point process has been marriage. The marriage effect was originally posited by Sampson and Laub (1993). Furthermore, the relationship between marriage and crime was assessed in Laub, Nagin, and Sampson (1998) using rigorous controls to account for heterogeneity. This finding has been fairly robust across a range of studies and methods including within-individual analyses using self-report and official arrest measures and with both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (e.g., Farrington and West 1995; Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995; Shover 1996; Piquero, MacDonald, and Parker 2002; Blokland and Nieuwebeerta 2005; King, Massoglia, and MacMillan 2007; Beaver et al. 2008; Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwebeerta 2009). Further, more recent evaluations use propensity scores to address concerns over selection and identify consistent effects of marriage on crime reduction (Sampson, Laub, and Wimer 2006; King, Massoglia, and MacMillan 2007; Theobald and Farrington 2009). Although a marriage effect persists, such an effect may not be distributed equally across the population. Evidence suggests that it is strongest for males with the lowest propensity to marry and among men who marry earlier (King, Massoglia, and MacMillan 2007; Theobald and Farrington, 2009, 2011). Additionally, Bersani and DiPetro (2016) demonstrate that the crime-reducing benefits of marriage do not apply consistently across racial and ethnic groups but are more pronounced among black and Hispanic men compared to white men despite the declining prevalence of marriage among minorities (see also Piquero, MacDonald, and Parker 2002; Harris, Lee, and DeLeone 2010).

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Evidence in support for the role of marriage is also not tied to findings in the United States. Evaluating the role of marriage in the Netherlands, Bersani, Laub, and Nieuwebeerta (2009) utilize the Criminal Career and Life Course Study (5,000 men and women convicted in the Netherlands) and find support for the effect of marriage to reduce offending across gender and a contemporary socio-historical context. Utilizing data from official population registries in Finland, Savolainen (2009) finds that union formation, which includes being married or cohabitating, is significantly associated with crime leading to approximately a 10 percent reductions in the number of new convictions; however, when separated out it appears that cohabitation drives the  $\downarrow$  reduction in recidivism. Thus, the “good marriage effect” persists among offenders in several geographic and historical contexts (see also Blokland and Nieuwebeerta 2005).

Recent work additionally contributes to establishing causality and to substantiating how marriage matters in the desistance process (e.g., Sampson, Laub, and Wimer, 2006; Bersani and Doherty, 2013). Sampson, Laub, and Wimer (2006) conceptualize the potential causal effect of being in the state of marriage (which hypothetically could be randomly or exogenously induced) with the state of non-marriage for the same person within a counterfactual modeling strategy. Results indicate that being married is associated with a 35 percent average reduction in the probability of crime among the sample of 52 Glueck men assessed from ages 17 to 70. Additional support is found through a prospective twin study that sought to similarly present a counterfactual approach to identify the causal effect of marriage (Burt et al. 2010). Using a longitudinal sample of male twins, analyses by Burt et al. (2010) suggest that although there is some evidence of selection among those twins who marry, a significant effect of marriage toward desistance exists.

Bersani and Doherty (2013) utilize an enduring-versus-treatment model to assess how and why marriage matters. In particular, Bersani and Doherty (2013) focus on the changes in offending when a marriage ends. They argue that although there are several posited mechanisms to explain the marriage effect, each mechanism carries a specific type of change process. These change processes are characterized on a spectrum of being either a stable or enduring change (e.g., social bonds) or a situational or temporary change (e.g., knifing off, supervision). Initial analyses suggest that upon entering a state of divorce, individuals have a higher likelihood of arrest that is stable during the months of being divorced. As Hirschi (1969) described, without the external tie of a spouse, “the divorced man is more likely after divorce to commit a number of deviant acts” (p. 19). In order to account for the fact that marriage likely reflects an investment process that occurs gradually over time, analyses were disaggregated by the length of marriage. Evidence suggests here that for longer marriages there is an immediate increase in offending after divorce, indicating the salience of situational contributors to desistance (e.g., direct supervision, routine activities). This finding contrasts with expectations that lengthier marriages that dissolve would not lead to an immediate increase in offending due to the accumulation of invested social bonds and capital. Ultimately, Bersani and Doherty (2013) contribute to the understanding of Laub and Sampson’s (2003) notion that there are underlying mechanisms triggered by turning points such as marriage. In the case of these analyses, the change processes associated with marriage are more strongly supportive of situational shifts associated with marriage (i.e., knifing off, routine activities).

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Most recently, Skardhamar, Savolainen, Aase, and Lyngstad (2015) conducted a review of the literature evaluating the marriage-crime relationship. Motivated by skepticism surrounding the causal effect of marriage on criminal behavior, these scholars include 58 publications between 1990 and 2014 in their review. In total, 36 of the 58 publications (62 percent) find marriage to be associated with desistance from crime. An additional 9 studies provide mixed support for the relationship between marriage and  $\downarrow$  desistance, leading to a total of 45 out of 58 studies (78 percent) that demonstrate some support for the negative association. Skardhamar and colleagues (2015) summarize key patterns found in the literature that further specify or contextualize the relationship. These patterns include findings previously discussed related to the role of cohabitation, gender-conditioned impacts of the marriage effect, and the extent to which the marriage effect can be generalized to contexts outside of the United States and United Kingdom.

Further, Skardhamar et al. (2015) criticize the validity of existing research that seeks to identify the causal relationship between marriage and desistance. In essence, they argue that a sizable portion of the current literature “is equally consistent with noncausal theories” (p. 426), as there are no studies that provide evidence of counterfactual causal evidence as “defined by prevailing methodological standards” (p. 429) and an accurate consideration of time-ordering between marriage and desistance.

As previously mentioned, both Sampson et al. (2006) and King et al. (2007) attempt to isolate the causal effect of marriage through their respective applications of inverse probability of treatment weighting and propensity score matching. While both of these studies generally conclude that the evidence is consistent with a causal effect of marriage on crime in the expected direction, Skardhamar et al. (2015) suggest that neither of these approaches can derive causal conclusions that would be found in randomized experiments or methodological alternatives such as instrumental variables. But Skardhamar et al. (2015) also concede that both randomized experiments and instrumental variable approaches are likely implausible with respect to studying marriage and recommend scholars “pursue the next-best approach” (p. 430), which includes quasi-experimental methods such as instrumental variable estimation. Skardhamar et al. (2015) clearly are unsatisfied with existing studies that attempt to address concerns surrounding causality, however, they do not offer viable alternatives to build on this existing knowledge.

Our point here is not to diminish efforts that can help triangulate or refine existing causal arguments in support of the marriage effect on crime, but rather to recognize the inherent difficulties in aligning causal identification with the social nature of the research question under inquiry. Consistent with the efforts of Sampson et al. (2006) and King et al. (2007), it would seem to be more important to continue to focus on understanding the assumptions made in methodological decisions, assess the robustness of findings, and provide conceptual transparency in the evident “marriage effect” in lieu of an arguably impossible search for a randomized experiment of marriage. Put differently and more generally, to rule out evidence that only comes from non-randomized experiments is to rule out most of criminology.

## B. Employment

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Findings from several other studies have mixed support for the capacity of entry into employment to reduce offending, with several noted caveats. The majority of research on this relationship has been cross-sectional and clearly prevents a firm understanding of the causal relationship between employment and crime (see Uggen and Wakefield 2008).<sup>4</sup> Longitudinal analyses that focus on individual-level data are much more limited and tend to find mixed results (Uggen and Wakefield 2008). For example, among a sample of incarcerated drug offenders, O’Connell (2003) finds that employment is negatively associated with drug use and arrest. Tripodi, Kim, and Bender (2010) evaluate the relationship between employment and recidivism among parolees released from Texas prisons and find that although employment is not necessarily associated with a reduction in the likelihood of reincarceration, it does lead to increases in the amount of time spent in the community crime-free before returning to prison.

Additional support has been found for the notion that the subjective quality of employment, as compared to simply being employed, explains the relationship between employment and a reduction in offending. Wadsworth (2006) finds that among a sample from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, the quality of employment matters over and beyond the income from and stability of employment in explaining involvement in a variety of criminal behavior. Mesters, van der Geest, and Bijleveld (2016) utilize a dynamic discrete choice modeling strategy to understand the mechanism that explains the employment–crime relationship and find that regular, as opposed to temporary employment drives the negative relationship with crime.



Parallel to the results for marriage, the effects of employment on antisocial behavior are found outside the United States as well. Evaluating the impact of employment on crime in the Netherlands, Verbruggen, Blokland, and van Der Geest (2012) find that after controlling for between-person differences associated with both crime and employment, employment has both an immediate and gradual effect on crime for both high-risk men and women—although effects for women were not as strong, particularly when compared to those men who experienced continuous employment. In Finland, Savolainen (2009) finds that obtaining employment is the strongest predictor of desistance reflected by the 40 percent reduction in the rate of recidivism. Despite some mixed results, the addition of new socio-historical contexts and empirical evaluations employment does seem to explain part of the complex processes of desistance.<sup>5</sup>

## C. Military Service

Scholars generally describe military service as a potentially important life event that serves to redirect trajectories of behaviors across a variety of domains (see MacLean and Elder 2007 for review). To some extent, military service serves as the quintessential life-course event, as it encapsulates many of the core principles of the life-course paradigm. The decision to join (or being drafted) into military service is rooted in a particular time and place, which carries developmental consequences upon return from service. As it relates to crime and deviance, scholars have noted that military service may serve as a “knifing-off” experience from social disadvantage, provide new structure to routine activities, reduce criminal opportunities, and provide additional job training or opportunities (Browning, Lopreato, and Poston 1973; Elder 1999; Laub and Sampson 2003). Earlier work that focuses on the experience of military service during World War II generally finds positive effects of military service reflected in reductions in offending (Sampson and Laub 1996). Still, qualitative evidence from interviews with the Glueck men demonstrate that entry into the military may also disrupt existing social roles and expectations and also may provide another environment in which deviant behavior can persist (Sampson and Laub 1993; Laub and Sampson 2003).

More recent endeavors have sought to further our understanding of the role of military service in trajectories of criminal behavior by studying participants of the Vietnam War (Bouffard 2003; Bouffard and Laub 2004; Wright, Carter, and Cullen 2005; Bouffard 2014). To be sure, World War II and the Vietnam War reflect very different experiences in U.S. military history, and therefore it is anticipated that such differences may play out in the outcomes of analyses. Public sentiment and support for World War II was significantly stronger than for the Vietnam War, as there was confusion over U.S. involvement (Moskos 1971; Mueller 1971; Janowitz 1978; Scott 2004). Challenges over the inequality of the draft and the overall treatment of the Vietnamese further exacerbated the negative views over U.S. involvement and perceptions of the military (Moskos 1971; Scott 2004). Lastly, the postwar period of World War II was characterized by economic growth, whereas the years after the Vietnam War were plagued by economic instability. Research confirms this instability; servicemen experience poorer labor market outcomes and acquire less education when compared to nonveterans (Angrist 1990; Cohen, Warner, and Segal 1995). Given the context of the Vietnam War, studying the effect of Vietnam military service as a turning point for criminal behavior provides a chance to evaluate the similarities and differences with prior findings on the role of World War II military service.

Bouffard (2003) considers the differential influence of military service during the Vietnam War through an evaluation of Wolfgang’s 1945 Philadelphia birth cohort (see Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin 1994) and Lyle Shannon’s 1949 Racine birth cohort (see Shannon 1994). After accounting for key differences in the likelihood of entering the military, results indicate that service during the Vietnam War led to reductions in subsequent offending; however, there is no relationship with violent behavior. Subsequent work by Bouffard (2014) extends these analyses to further investigate whether the historical period of military service conditions the relationship with criminal behavior. Bouffard (2014) finds that the effect of military service depends on when the men in both the Philadelphia and Racine cohorts start their service. Specifically, those



whose service started post-1968 had significantly lower rates of offending compared to those who did not serve in the military and those who began military service in Vietnam during other time periods. This finding is consistent with Sampson and Laub's (1996) conclusion that military service is dependent on the age of entry into service during World War II.

p. 305 The experience of military service as it relates to criminal behavior also is demonstrated to vary by subgroups. In an evaluation of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Bouffard (2005) investigates the interaction between military service and individual demographics. Although military service generally predicts an increase in violent behavior, this finding is limited to specific subgroups in the sample (Bouffard 2005). Specifically, results indicate that military service in Vietnam had detrimental impacts for Hispanic, lower-class, and delinquent subjects. Although Bouffard (2005) is not able to empirically test why these groups of individuals differed, it is suggested that the military may only serve as a "bridging environment" to successful opportunities and change for certain groups (Browning, Lopreato, and Poston 1973). Ultimately, military service appears to be a turning point for criminal behavior; however, the direction and intensity of this process varies by socio-historical context and does not seem to have a constant effect across all those in the armed forces.

## D. Physical Relocation

As stated, in an effort to explore the underlying mechanisms of structural turning points, *Shared Beginnings* expands the age-graded theory of informal social control. One such life event that illuminates these mechanisms is physical relocation. For example, some of the Glueck men who desisted indicate the importance of shifts in their residential location as being critical for changing their behavior, which may suggest that residential change activates these underlying processes. One Glueck man (Henry) indicates that he could not return to his previous neighborhood because he would end up either dead or in jail (Laub and Sampson 2003).

More recent work additionally supports the notion that residential shifts serve as turning points in the life course, particularly because they implicate these underlying processes. Kirk (2009) uses the consequences of the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans as a natural experiment to evaluate whether residential changes affected recidivism among ex-prisoners and finds a reduction in rate of reincarceration among those ex-offenders who subsequently move out of their prior parish. This effect persisted in a follow-up study indicating that the reduction in the risk of reincarceration due to a change in residential location for these ex-offenders was not temporary and in fact endured over a 3-year observational period (Kirk 2012). Additional work by Sharkey and Sampson (2010) find Chicago adolescents who move to a neighborhood outside of Chicago experience a reduction in the likelihood of violent offending. These findings reinforce the notion that desistance is more likely to occur in contexts that remove individuals from criminal lifestyles, associates, and structures.

## E. Summary of Current Empirical Literature

p. 306 These more recent assessments of criminal behavior across the life course highlight the extent of heterogeneity in longitudinal patterns of offending, undercutting claims of age-invariance for the relationship between age and crime (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983). Additionally, these findings reflect the goal of life-course criminology to situate the entire life course into an understanding of criminal behavior. Thus, rather than assuming that the relationship between age and crime is “inherent, invariant, and inexplicable” (Tittle and Grasmick 1997, p. 310), these results provide evidence that “behavioral change matters” and cannot be overlooked (Ezell and Cohen 2005, p. 255). In a thorough assessment of behavioral stability and change across the life course, for example, Ezell and Cohen (2005, p. 259) evaluate three independent serious offending samples from the California Youth Authority and conclude that “(1) behavioral change is evident among serious chronic offenders, (2) that the heterogeneity in criminal propensity among the chronic offender population is often underreported, and (3) that there is considerable post-adolescent heterogeneity in the arrest rates of offenders that cannot be explained purely as a consequence of earlier individual differences.”

Although not an empirical test of theoretical mechanisms, the conclusions drawn by Ezell and Cohen (2005) succinctly depict several of the core theoretical abstractions and predictions of the age-graded theory of informal social control that are assessed in the preceding paragraphs. In order to further situate and appreciate the sizeable empirical support for this theory, we must contemplate the available criticisms and empirical challenges. The following section provides a current overview of major challenges to this life-course perspective and will be supplemented with our own responses to these challenges.

## III. Challenges to the Causal Importance of Turning Points

A potential challenge to the importance of turning points in the processes of desistance is that transitions into marriage, employment, or military service may be to due non-random selection into these states. Asked simply, are turning points the chicken or the egg in the desistance process (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna, and Bushway 2008)? Characteristics of the individual including prior experience, individual traits, subjective factors, and other non-random factors may influence entry into marriage or other key turning point processes, thereby confounding the marriage–desistance relationship (see also Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). Additionally, scholars have argued that “[past studies] do not address the critical issue of time order with sufficient precision” (Skardhamar and Savolainen 2014). Such challenges are paramount to determining the validity of the causality of turning points in explaining age-graded changes in offending behavior. Although Laub and Sampson (2003) attempt to address these concerns, several scholars have levied criticisms of the efforts of Sampson and Laub (1993) and Laub and Sampson (2003) to establish the causality of turning points (see Lyngstad and Skardhamar 2013; Skardhamar and Savolainen 2014).

## A. Selection into Marriage and Employment

p. 307 Lyngstad and Skardhamar (2013) argue that Sampson and Laub compare average offending levels before and after marriage leading to an overstatement of the marriage effect and an understatement of selection. Using data from the Norwegian administrative registrar, these scholars find that changes in offending largely occur prior to marriage followed by a small increase in offending after marriage. Thus, according to Lyngstad and Skardhamar (2013), because changes in offending for those who get married occur largely before marriage and the effect of getting married is negligible, “it is time to stop viewing marriage as a particularly important turning point in the process of desistance when considering contexts from contemporary industrialized societies” (p. 14). Further, given the reported increase in offending after marriage, Lyngstad and Skardhamar (2013) emphasize the importance of understanding the processes leading up to marriage (e.g., courtship, cohabitation, parenthood).<sup>6</sup>

Along similar lines, Barnes et al. (2014) argue that the relationship between crime and turning points are likely reciprocal, such that offenders’ criminal behavior may impact their marital propensity. Sampson and Laub (1993) address this specific issue through their discussion of simultaneous modeling of adult social bonds and crime and deviance. Sampson and Laub (1993) find that the role of adult social bonds “is both instantaneous and predictive in nature, independent not only of childhood deviance but of the simultaneous effects of adult crime as well” (pp. 170–171).

Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) report similar results for the role of employment as a turning point in the life course (see also Mesters et al. 2016). Again, using the Norwegian registrar data, Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) find that although employment matters in explaining changes in criminal behavior, significant changes in behavior occur largely prior to job entry and for only a small percentage of the sample (2 percent) do changes in offending occur after employment. Laub and Sampson acknowledge that turning points are not singular events and are more realistically part of a gradual process (Laub, Nagin, and Sampson 1998; Laub and Sampson 2003). Further, the mechanisms associated with turning points such as marriage and employment are not a constant once set in motion, and they vary through time. As such, Sampson and Laub have adopted several different methodological approaches to account for selection processes and to identify the impact of the structural turning points responsible for desistance. It would appear that nothing short of a true randomized experiment would address many of the criticisms levied against the importance of marriage and employment. Of note, in an evaluation of the experimental National Supported Work Demonstration Project, Uggen (2000) finds that employment reduces reports of crimes and arrest among those aged 27 or older. But of course, it is difficult if not impossible to randomize marriage, and even if were, experiments have their own limitations with respect to external validity (Sampson 2010). Overall, we conclude that the results to date indicate more support for the marriage effect than employment effect, with the main outlier coming from administrative records in Norway. Whether there is something unique to Norway, the peculiarities of their sample and data, or the analysis in the work of Skardhamar and Savolainen (2014) is beyond the scope of our review but bears further inquiry.

## B. Human Agency Across the Life Course

Laub and Sampson (2003) conclude that for a majority of their sample it is normative to desist and that there is a “desistance by default” process. This process is criticized as being an “anti-agentic” process in comparison to the underlying notion of agency as an actionable choice-based process. In fact, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) go so far to criticize Laub and Sampson (2003) for continuing to rely on a structuralist theory that ignores the importance of human agency and rational choice in explanations of change and stability in offending. Additionally, Paternoster and Bushway (2004) claim that believing in agency requires a rational choice perspective. From a rational choice perspective, agency is simply a matter of preferences and how preferences can be used to change or modify inputs or exogenous events like employment and marriage (Paternoster and Bushway 2004).

Our assessment is that the revolution in behavioral economics has rendered the pure rational choice model invalid. The evidence is now overwhelming that humans make decisions “beneath the radar screen” of conscious choice, with mechanisms such as confirmation bias and implicit bias well documented (Sunstein and Thaler 2008; Kahneman 2011). Laub and Sampson (2003) also argue that rational choice ignores the fact that we choose, discover, and construct preferences over the course of time to generate new preferences that are not yet known (March 1978). Choice is not exogenous, in other words. Agency is situated in context and is therefore a dynamic, rather than static, construct which is a relational characteristic rather than a property of the person or the environment. Agency is composed of an ongoing interaction between person and environment that is a crucial ingredient of causation.

Further, in contrast to other theories of desistance that focuses on cognitive transformations or identity shifts as being necessary for the process of desistance to occur, Laub and Sampson (2003) find that many offenders can and do desist without a conscious decision to “make good,” as claimed in works such as Maruna (2001), Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002), Farrall (2005), and Paternoster and Bushway (2009). For instance, Paternoster and Bushway’s (2009) identity theory argues that individual offenders possess a working self, positive possible self, and feared self. Individuals are tied to their working self, which may be criminal in nature, and will only change through a process of crystallization of discontent. This process involves recognition of the potential feared self and a realization that the costs of crime and a criminal identity are too high. The accumulation and linking of negative experiences associated with a criminal lifestyle leads to further motivation for self-change (Paternoster and Bushway 2009).

Giordano and colleagues (2002) similarly develop a theory of cognitive transformation that involves significant upfront work to ensure desistance. Specifically, individuals must be open to change that either coincides or is followed by “hooks for change” or turning points (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002). Upon acting on this turning point, the individual is able to envision and adopt a replacement self that triggers a re-evaluation of how an individual perceives deviant behavior. In this depiction of desistance, “the actor creatively and selectively draws upon elements of the environment in order to affect significant life changes” (Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph 2002, p. 1003).

Laub and Sampson (2003) acknowledge that the original age-graded theory of informal social control was an incomplete response to explaining desistance and consequently have recognized the relevance of recognizing human social action in the lives of the Glueck men. Combinations of both objective and subjective factors are implicated in the process of desistance and persistence. The qualitative narratives facilitate Laub and Sampson’s (2003) understanding of the “situated choice(s)” made as a result of the interaction between life-course transitions, macro-level events, situational context, and individual will of the Glueck men. This is illuminated by the fact that the data collected on the Glueck men indicate that desistance is primarily facilitated by turning points in combination with individual actions. Most importantly, desistance is not necessarily a conscious or deliberate decision, but rather a series of “side bets” that are fostered through the experience of socially embedded life events such as marriage,

employment, and the military (Becker 1960, p. 38). Generally speaking, this hypothesis is consistent with the research on behavioral economic that moves beyond a pure rational choice model (Sunstein and Thaler 2008; Kahneman 2011).

## C. Additional Challenges Regarding Human Agency

Laub and Sampson (2003) state that agency is the “missing link” in desistance research; however, our understanding of the precise definition of agency and how individuals are able to act “agentically” are less clear (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Several scholars offer very different definitions of agency that produce a lack of consensus among researchers on how to measure this concept. For instance, Bottoms et al. (2004, p. 376) defines agency as “choices . . . taken within specific social contexts,” whereas Paternoster and Pogarsky (2009, p. 111) describe agency as an “intentional activity directed toward some goal” (see Healy 2013 for further review). Given these different conceptualizations, we are left with a lack of clarity on whether any of these definitions actually encapsulate the “missing link” in desistance research or can be operationalized without succumbing to post hoc interpretation. Without proper guidance, empirical evaluations that seek to incorporate human agency may also largely be based on previous research efforts or the availability of particular measures in the data. Similar criticisms of this approach have been levied by Farnworth, Thornberry, Krohn, and Lizotte’s (1994) discussion of measurement issues of the relationship between social class and delinquency. In particular, they argue that, if scholars seek to test theory, “[i]nadequate measures may lead to research-based rejection of theories, despite the fact that theory falsification is only as valid as the indicators used to represent key concepts” (Farnworth, Krohn, and Lizotte 1994, p. 34).

p. 310 Given the current state of agency and its use in empirical work, we would like to offer commentary on the future of agency in the field of criminology. First, as referenced above, agency has not been well defined and is filled with ambiguity. Right now agency has become in many ways all things to all people, reminiscent of what happened to the term social capital a decade or so ago. Of course, people have agency to choose, but we are not convinced that all the attempts to examine agency have borne much fruit or yielded clear support for any one theory over another. Second, when the focus is on what starts inside one’s head, in our view, the subsequent theory cannot be fully tested. Recall that Hirschi (1969) dismissed the “internalization of norms” in *Causes of Delinquency* and turned to Durkheim to argue for the idea that it was in the relationship that attachment existed (i.e., the external tie). Third, even if we can define and measure agency with validity, as a concept it makes no sense absent a full understanding of the context within which decisions or choices are made.

In sum, based on the accumulation of available evidence, it is our contention that behavioral change is most likely to occur when external changes precede internal changes. In this view, agency is contingent on the situation/context/structure, a view we believe that is consistent with research emerging from the field of behavioral economics.

## IV. Contemporary Desistance

Criminological research has struggled to situate data into historical context and consequently has limited our understanding of how lives develop in time and space. Such an approach reflects what Dannefer (1984) terms the “ontogenetic” model, which assumes a maturational unfolding irrespective of socio-historical context. Sampson and Laub’s (1993) analysis of the Glueck data explicitly brings in the surrounding context of the Glueck men to recognize that “[s]ocial facts are located” in a bounded historical and spatial context (Abbott 1997, p. 1152). The Glueck data and the historical context in which the data were collected serve as a baseline to identifying consistencies or differences in research findings over time.

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The Glueck men grew up during the 1930s and early 1940s in the city of Boston and experienced a specific macro- and micro-level historical context. Drugs, such as crack cocaine, were not as widespread as they are today. Criminal violence, particularly gun violence, was at much lower levels during the Glueck men's lives. The military experiences of some of the Glueck subjects included the last few years of World War II, the stationing of troops in Japan and West Germany, and the Korean War. Such widespread involvement in several wars, growth in the use of the GI Bill of Rights, and use of the draft simply does not exist in today's world. Comparisons of the transition between adolescence and adulthood have also found that there has been a lengthening in the time period with which adolescents developmentally achieve adulthood. Arnett (2000, 2004, 2011) refers to these years as emerging adulthood during which individuals may feel like they are no longer adolescents but have yet to reach adult status. This is driven largely by the fact that traditional markers of adult status (marriage, jobs, children, moving out of the home) occur later in the life course than traditionally experienced in the past.

Although Laub and Sampson (1995b) argue that the "age" of the Glueck data serves as strength to exploit, it is important to consider how current socio-historical contexts shape and alter desistance processes related to notions of age-graded social controls and structurally induced turning points. The following section will discuss two major shifts in today's world that may influence the capacity of men such as those in the Glueck study to desist from crime.

## A. Cohabitation and the Decline of Marriage

Recent trends suggest that the nature of marriage is changing in two key ways. First, marriage rates in the United States are at record lows, and this decline in marriage is more pronounced in racial and low-socioeconomic-status communities (Pew Research 2010; Cruz 2013; Wang and Parker 2014). Further, among those who do marry, divorce rates are significantly higher among segments of society with lower income and have remained fairly stable among those with higher levels of income (Bramlett and Mosher 2002). These factors suggest that there is increasing stratification of the experience of marriage, with a noticeable decline in the experience of marriage for communities at higher risk for crime. Still, despite differences in the prevalence of marriage, empirical evidence suggests that minority groups are likely to experience the reductions in offending associated with marriage (e.g., Bersani and DiPetro 2016). These social factors warrant consideration of the role of this transition as it is embedded in the changing socio-macro context of the United States.

Second, there has been growth in the proportion of "first unions" between heterosexual couples that begin as cohabitation. Research suggests that between 2006 and 2010, 48 percent of women cohabitated with men as a first union (Copen, Daniels, and Mosher 2013). This figure has grown significantly since 1995, when only 34 percent of women's first unions was characterized by cohabitation. To be sure, cohabitation is not necessarily replacing marriage but is rather delaying the age at first marriage and contributing to the notion of emerging adulthood and the overall decline in marriage rates (Arnett 2000; Bramlett and Mosher 2002).

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It is also not yet clear whether or not cohabitation and marriage should be placed on equal ground with respect to desistance. Both forms of relationship carry vastly different legal implications and also possess potentially very different social norms by which behavior and expectations are guided (Bowman 2004; Nock 1995; Waite and Gallagher 2001). These legal and social differences may contribute to the nature and quality of the relationship between individuals. For example, evidence suggests that those individuals cohabitating indicate less-than-desirable relationship satisfaction, stability, and commitment (Nock 1995; Brown and Booth 1996; Forste and Tanfer 1996; Hansen, Moum and Shapiro 2007). Thus, the question posed by Laub and Sampson (2003) of whether the crime-suppression benefits of marriage would translate to those couples who are involved in cohabitation or other arrangements remains an important step for current life-course research to address. Earlier work concludes that cohabitation was a criminogenic experience as

it served to increase offending (Horney, Osgood, and Marshall 1995). Yet more recent efforts to assess this “new normal” of first unions between couples offers mixed evidence for the role of cohabitation in explaining change in criminal behavior.

As part of Sampson, Laub, and Wimer’s (2006) reanalysis of the Glueck data to determine the causal effect of marriage, additional analyses assess the effect of being in a stable relationship not characterized by the arrangement of marriage. Although cohabitation among the Glueck men was relatively rare, cohabitation exhibits a statistically negative relationship with crime even after controlling for marriage. Savolainen (2009) evaluates the core tenets of the theory among a Finnish sample and includes a specific test of the role of cohabitation, particularly due to the high degree of cohabitation in Finland. Perhaps most surprisingly, once cohabitation and marriage are both controlled for, cohabitation is associated with larger reductions in criminal behavior than getting married. Savolainen (2009) attributes this finding to the fact that it is customary for partners to cohabit before marriage; therefore, among a sample of offenders, those who choose to quickly get married may reflect a higher degree of tolerance for criminal behavior and lifestyles choices. Thus, a higher proportion of prosocial mates are among those who are interested in cohabitating as compared to those who choose to marry.

Several other studies present mixed findings with respect to cohabitation. For instance, Duncan, Wilkerson, and England (2006) evaluate whether cohabitation influences behavior in the same manner as marriage or whether it could be characterized as an “incomplete institution” that does not contain the same structure, normative guidance, and commitment as marriage (Cherlin 1978). Utilizing the NLSY 1979, Duncan, Wilkerson, and England (2006) find that cohabitation only appears to reduce binge drinking among women, whereas marriage appears to reduce both male substance use (i.e., binge drinking and marijuana use) and female binge drinking. Similarly using the NLSY, Forrest (2014) attempts to further understand the role of marriage and cohabitation by evaluating whether the effect of these experiences varied by the relationship quality. Regardless of relationship quality, cohabitation leads to a reduction in the number of drug offenses,<sup>7</sup> whereas property crime offenses are only reduced among those couples who are characterized as having a medium-quality relationship. Despite these patterns, marriage is consistently found to be related to reductions in all offense categories and additionally related to the cessation of criminal activity (Forrest 2014). The association between marriage and criminal behavior also varies by strength and quality of the marital relationship (Forrest 2014).

Although much of these findings provide support for the importance of marriage as a turning point in the desistance process, the extent of overlap between the underlying processes triggered by marriage and by cohabitation is unclear. The reality of relationship formation in contemporary society is ahead of theoretical explanations and systematic data collection; however, future work should continue to investigate the current state of marriage and how transitions between being single, cohabitation, marriage, and divorce affect the development of socially integrative bonds that facilitate behavioral change. Further, given evidence of the stratification of marriage, future work should evaluate how such processes emerge among different segments of the population.

## B. Collateral Consequences and the Growth in Incarceration

Conviction of a felony imposes a status upon a person which not only makes him vulnerable to future sanctions through new civil disability statutes, but which also seriously affects his reputation and economic opportunities.

—Chief Justice Warren, *Parker v. Ellis*, 362 U.S. 574 (1960)

Over the past few decades, the notion that once an individual serves his or her time their debt to society has been repaid has become a forgotten practice. Collateral consequences include a host of barriers—both legal



and social—that occur subsequent to criminal convictions. These consequences include denial of government licenses, welfare benefits, parental rights, the right to vote, housing opportunities, and employment and ineligibility for education programs (Mauer and Chesney-Lind 2002). Although we do not have space to discuss the history of collateral consequences in the context of the United States, several factors are worth mentioning to describe the factor that led to shifts in U.S. crime policy.

Largely since the passage of several legislative reforms in the 1970s and 1980s, both the federal government and states implemented policies that led to the proliferation of collateral sanctions and post-release disqualifications among those convicted of felonies and even misdemeanors (Love 2011). Evaluation of the rehabilitation of prisoners during this time period also led to the conclusion that “nothing works” further justified penalization of offenders (Martinson 1974). The establishment of the “war on drugs” has led to the growth in insurmountable deficits among socially disadvantaged minority communities. These challenges have further been supplemented by specific “invisible punishments” which penalize drug offenders (Travis 2002). Lastly, the nation’s welfare system has undergone significant changes through the reduction in individual access to welfare and imposition of time limits to benefits (Travis 2002). Each of these shifts coalesces around adding layers of punishment to involvement with the criminal justice system for segments of the most marginalized and defenseless population in our country. Perhaps most troubling is the net widening impacts these consequences have due to the unparalleled growth in state and federal prison and community supervision populations among these disadvantaged groups (National Research Council 2014). Between 1978 and 2009, the number of prisoners held in both state and federal facilities increased from roughly 200,000 to 1.5 million (Carson and Golinelli 2013; National Research Council 2014).

p. 314 Thus, given that most of these individuals who are incarcerated will be released and subsequently faced with barriers to access to health, employment, and housing, to what degree are mechanisms of desistance available to contemporary offenders? To be sure, barriers to desistance likely vary by state, as different state statutes govern the reintegrative experiences of offenders. We will briefly discuss how the collateral consequences movement has affected access to structural turning points with a particular emphasis on employment and marriage.

The effects of cumulative disadvantage and mortgaging one’s future through engaging in criminal behavior are likely felt hardest when discussing employment. In conjunction with the systematic and more permanent identification of individuals involved with the criminal justice system, increased use of background checks among employers has led to difficult employment prospects for individuals with a criminal record (Albright and Denq 1996; Pager 2003). Further, access to and the cost of maintaining criminal records among the public and private sector has been facilitated by advances in information technology (Solove 2004). The effects of imprisonment on securing employment are also conditioned by race and ethnicity, with the majority of stigmatization being attached to blacks or Hispanics (Pager 2003; Pager et al. 2009). In an interesting methodological approach, Pager (2003) uses matched pairs of white and black job applicants to submit resumes to employers, with the only difference being that one of the members in each pair indicates that they have a criminal record. Pager (2003) finds that employers are less likely to call back black applicants compared to white applicants regardless of whether a white applicant has a criminal record, but the effect of a criminal record is significantly more pronounced among black applicants. Black non-offenders are three times more likely to get a call back from the employer than black ex-offenders, whereas white non-offenders are only two times more likely to get a callback compared to white ex-offenders. Even if an individual with a record manages to get their foot into the door, research finds that employers perceive ex-offenders to be the least desirable applicants largely due to potential liability issues (Holzer, Raphael, and Stoll 2003). Thus, among those most affected by mass incarceration, enormous barriers act to disenfranchise them from access to employment.

Although collateral consequences have not explicitly targeted individuals because they are married, the effects of collateral consequences clearly contribute to the nature of relationship formation among those

involved with the criminal justice system. For instance, as the previous section discussed, having a criminal record may preclude an individual from obtaining employment, which may in turn place an individual at a disadvantage for marriage prospects (Western 2004). Research findings have generally supported the relative salience of marriage as a prosocial turning point; however, research on the effects of mass incarceration and marriage have also found that both men who are incarcerated and their potential pool of women in the “marriage market” are less likely to marry and in some cases cohabitate (Western and McLanahan 2004; Charles and Luoh 2010). Even among those who are married, incarcerated men are at higher risk of divorce (Western 2004; Siennick, Stewart, and Staff 2014). Lastly, at least some states allow for a partner to dissolve a marriage due to a spouse’s incarceration. It appears that the shifts in American penal policy have triggered an assault on the formation of the key social bonds for contemporary offenders. Achieving what Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) refer to as the “respectability package” of marriage and employment is encumbered by various collateral consequences. The implications of this process are still underexplored, but it is probably fair to conclude that the current landscape of desistance is likely different than the landscape during the lives of the Glueck men.

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## V. Conclusion

In a recent review of desistance research, Kazemian (2007) describes several dimensions of criminological approaches to investigating desistance processes. Chief among these are the identification of causal factors underlying the process of desistance, providing a comprehensive view of the entire life course, and exploring within-individual changes in behavior. It is our contention that the work by Sampson and Laub on the age-graded theory of informal social control initiated over 20 years ago encapsulates these dimensions. Through an assessment of perhaps one of the longest studies of criminal behavior ever collected, these authors have provided clear guidance on how and why some individuals persist and eventually desist from anti-social behavior. Further, recent methodological advances have allowed Laub and Sampson to not only address between-and-within individual change but further explore the causal relationship of turning points through the use of counterfactual-based analyses. Many other scholars have followed suit and largely with similar results. Challenges certainly remain, such as integrating qualitative and quantitative evaluations of behavior, assessing the underlying mechanisms and dimensions of turning points, accounting for choice processes, and evaluating age-graded trajectories in a contemporary social landscape. Ultimately, however, the age-graded theory of informal social control offers a guidepost for analytic investigation and potential resolution to these challenges in life-course and developmental criminology.

## Notes

1. Search terms included “Life-Course,” “Life-Course Criminology,” “Desistance,” “Trajectories,” “Transition/s,” “Turning Point/s,” “Criminal Career/s” in the title for the ProQuest Criminal Justice Database. This review did not include recent book publications, technical reports, or other types of manuscripts. We thank Katie Kozey for her research assistance in gathering these publications.
2. For a full review of the findings from *Crime in the Making* by Sampson and Laub (1993), see Laub, Sampson, and Sweeten (2006).
3. Disclaimer: Two of the authors of this chapter are originators of the theory and thus have an obvious interest in the outcome of any evaluation. All three authors recognize this conflict and strive to consult independent sources and provide a dispassionate account of the evidence. We also recognize that this problem is endemic to most if not all assessments of the literature because scholars have theoretical commitments that they bring to the task, even if implicit. Fortunately, the ultimate arbiter of a theory is the scholarly field and not any individual scholar.
4. One notable exception is Uggen’s (2000) experimental evaluation of the National Right to Work Project that will be

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discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

5. Criticisms offered by scholars on the causal importance of turning points will be discussed in a subsequent section (e.g., Lyngstad and Skardhamar 2013; Skardhamar and Savolainen 2014).
6. It is not at all clear what mechanism would lead to an increase in offending as the result of marriage. It is also possible that the decline in offending prior to marriage was the result of cohabitation. It is also not clear why “individual-level visceral factors such as proneness to addictions and temperament” would only be applicable in the post-marriage period (Lyngstad and Skardhamar 2013, p. 613). Finally, the failure to control for age looms large here.
7. Forrest (2014) acknowledges that these associations are not significant at conventional levels.

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